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SUBJECT: RWANDAN EXTERNAL AFFAIRS CHIEF ON EASTERN CONGO

Classified By: Ambassador Michael R. Arietti, reason 1.4 (B/D)

¶1. (C) Summary. Ambassador met with National Security Service External Affairs Chief Joseph Nzabamwita, at his request, on November 19 in Kigali to discuss events in the eastern Congo and potential avenues of action against the FDLR. Nzabamwita saw an unstable balance of forces in North Kivu among Nkunda, the Democratic Force for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) and the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC), with each facing looming logistical constraints and temptations to ease them by military action. He found the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) government to be "serious this time," considering the Nairobi Communique a good foundation for future action. While agreeing that a full basket of political, diplomatic and military options needed to be crafted, he believed that quick action against the FDLR command center in North Kivu, to seize or kill FDLR commander-in-chief Sylvestre Mudacumura and his principal lieutenants, would break the FDLR and end its long reign of terror in the eastern Congo. Nzabamwita's comments on the Nairobi Communique were the most positive assessment from a Rwandan official we have heard in some time on the subject of negative forces in the Congo. He made clear, however, that while continuing concerted action on diplomatic and political fronts are necessary components of progress in the Kivus, but effective use of military force may be necessary as well. We see this meeting as a Rwandan government (GOR) effort to carry through on promises, made during AF Advisor Shortley's recent visit, to expand dialogue on eastern Congo developments and the FDLR. End summary.

¶2. (C) Nzabamwita began his meeting with Ambassador on November 19 by thanking the USG for its renewed efforts to confront negative forces in the eastern Congo, praising particularly its role in the November 9 Nairobi Communique on the margins of the Conference on the Great Lakes sessions. "We should take the Congolese seriously this time," he said, referring to the December 1 date for the submission of an action plan by the DRC government (as assisted by MONUC). However, he cautioned that the GOR saw a "deteriorating balance of forces" in North Kivu among Nkunda, the FDLR and the Congolese armed forces, with each force facing increasing logistical problems and thereby possibly tempted to address them by military action. "We need a disengagement of forces to avoid fighting," he said, adding that, "even accidents could lead to serious fighting."

¶3. (C) When asked by Ambassador to cite the FDLR's principal weak points, Nzabamwita said the most effective

means of harming the FDLR would be a quick assault on its headquarters in North Kivu, with a attempt to either kill or capture FDLR Major General Mudacumura and his lieutenants. "All the senior commanders are in North Kivu," he said. If Mudacumura were taken, the FDLR would collapse, he predicted.

¶4. (C) Nzabamwita said there were several positive signs in the Kivus in recent days: the GOR had seen reduced military shipments to the FDLR from local Congolese army commanders since the Nairobi Communique; the DRC defense minister had pledged to "discipline" eastern Congo military commanders who aided the FDLR (although he had not done so, yet, said Nzabamwita); and several individual DRC commanders were clearly opposed to aiding the FDLR. However, the Rwandans had received one disturbing intelligence report, he said, from GOR sources close to the FDLR. The FDLR 2nd division commander had met with the FARDC 10th military district commander, who was accompanied by the local MONUC commander. The message supposedly passed from the FARDC commander to the FDLR was to ignore the Nairobi Communique, since the FARDC and FDLR are still on the same side. Not discounting that this could be FDLR misinformation, Nzabamwita commented that, if true, the report would be a worrying counter to the Nairobi momentum. One reaction to recalcitrant Congolese commanders should be to "switch them" out of the Kivus, he said. In particular, he cited 8th Military Region Deputy for Operations and Intelligence, Colonel Delphin Kahimi.

¶5. (C) Ambassador noted that a combined approach to the FDLR and other negative forces in the Kivus was called for in the Nairobi Communique, with its emphasis on coordinated political, diplomatic and military actions by the DRC and Rwanda. The Ambassador noted the GOR had pledged at Nairobi to "seal" its border. What this meant as a minimum, suggested the Ambassador, was the halting of any recruitment attempts by Nkunda operatives in refugee camps. While acknowledging that refugee camps in Rwanda, as elsewhere, had no fences and no locked gates, the Ambassador pressed for more action in this regard. Nzabamwita agreed that the combined approach of the Nairobi Communique was important. He also stated, "we will do what we can on the refugee recruiting."

¶6. (C) As a side note, Nzabamwita acknowledged continuing difficulties at the Tripartite-Plus Fusion Cell in Kisangani with the Ugandan intelligence service on the subject of agreed lists of negative forces members and the People's Redemption Army (PRA). Noting that Uganda had failed to provide credible intelligence on the PRA's military structures, the Fusion Cell had been unable to confirm its existence as a political-military negative force. Ugandan insistence on including names for a force no one else believed existed made work in Kisangani "very difficult," he said.

¶7. (C) Ambassador also reminded Nzabamwita of the USG desire that Rwanda encourage Nkunda to send at least some of his men to brassage as a positive gesture. He noted that the Nairobi Agreement, with its focus on the FDLR, showed USG understanding of the need to take into account threats to vulnerable Tutsi populations. Nkunda should now show his good will.

¶8. (C) Comment. Nzabamwita's cautious but supportive comments on the Nairobi Communique are the most positive assessment from Rwandan officialdom we have heard in some time on the subject of negative forces in eastern Congo and the many plans over the last months and years to eradicate them. As he made clear, while continuing concerted action on diplomatic and political fronts are necessary components of progress in the Kivus, effective use of military force may be necessary as well. End Comment.